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PNELSON-DOUVELIS/JVANCE/JBEIK

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SUBJECT: CODEL MCGOVERN VISITS EASTERN CHAD, MEETS SUDAN REBELS

¶1. (U) SUMMARY. Rep. James McGovern and staffers, plus Ambassador and Emboffs, visited the Abeche area on 6-7 April, meeting with local Chadian authorities, UN officials, NGO workers, and Sudanese rebel leaders. The group drove to Gaga camp to meet with Sudanese refugees. In a meeting with Representatives of the Sudanese National Redemption Front (NRF) in their camp outside of town, Sudanese rebels stressed their support for Darfur peace talks and the need to unify the rebel movements. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) CODEL McGovern visited Abeche and the nearby Gaga refugee camp in eastern Chad on 6 April, before departing to KouKou Angarana on 7 April (septel). After meeting with UNHCR Abeche Office Director Catherine Huck, and paying a courtesy call on the Secretary General of the Ouaddai Region, the delegation proceeded to the Gaga Refugee Camp, accompanied by Huck and her External Relations Officer.

Gaga Camp

¶3. (U) The camp at Gaga, the newest and perhaps best organized of the camps on the Chad-Sudan border, now hosts almost 15,000 refugees. Most new arrivals from Sudan are settled in the camp, which still has room to accommodate additional refugees. Africare, the camp manager, escorted the group on a tour of the camp, visiting a food distribution center, the clinic (run by International Medical Corps), a school, and a large area set aside for vegetable gardens. In a meeting with camp leaders and teachers, the delegation received an earful about needs for security, water, and more plentiful food rations. The group also visited a site on the edge of the camp where refugees who have provided testimony to investigators from the International Criminal Court on Sudanese war crimes receive protective custody.

Meeting with Sudanese Rebels

¶4. (SBU) In the evening the CODEL met with a delegation from the National Redemption Front (NRF) and Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) outside Abeche. With Tajadine Niam, a political representatives for the NRF and JEM, as the lead speaker, the rebel representatives discussed the marginalization of Darfur (and other parts of Sudan) and the division of Darfur into three separate regions. They stressed that they are seeking compensation, reconciliation, and a greater say in the government in Khartoum, not independence from Sudan.

¶5. (SBU) The representatives said they are committed to working with United Nations Special Envoy Eliason, the neighboring countries, and other initiatives for peace in Darfur. They distanced themselves from the African Union, claiming it was weak and has shown itself one-sided in its support for Khartoum. They

said the Ceasefire Commission (CFC) was not working and needed to be overhauled. They urged unity among the various Darfur rebel groups, complaining that disunity was their greatest weakness. The Sudanese Liberation Movement (SLM) itself, they complained, has between five and seven different factions.

¶6. (SBU) Asked about additional steps they believe the international community should support, the representatives proposed a no-fly zone in Darfur and stronger sanctions against the Sudan government. Rep. McGovern reminded the delegation that he had been arrested last year for protesting outside the Sudanese Embassy in Washington. He expressed concerns about militarization of the refugee camps, an issue raised in the past with the rebels by both UNHCR and the Embassy. The delegation said they would work to prevent the camps from being used for military purposes.

¶7. (U) The CODEL departed Chad without an opportunity to clear this cable.

¶8. (U) Tripoli minimize considered. Wall